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LENTEN PENANCE

THE EDITOR

BY the time this issue of *THE LIFE* appears the good Christian will have found himself enclosed within the penitential season of Lent. If he is an observant Christian he may well have been comparing the present practice of Lenten penance with that of even twenty years ago, when the majority of Catholics for forty days had to be content with one proper meal a day. Now he begins with a flourish on Ash Wednesday and for the rest of the season until Good Friday he finds himself still 'benefiting' by the war-time dispensations. As an observant Christian he may wonder whether he is not likely to grow lax and flabby in his spiritual life without the authoritative command to do penance in a precise and clearly defined manner. His mind may turn to the more recent visions of our Lady, who at Lourdes and Fatima, for example, seemed to encourage not only a revival in the spirit of prayer, but also in the spirit and practice of penance. The Christian people, he may deliberate within himself, seem ready to respond to the appeal to prayer in such movements as the Rosary crusade, but lag behind like children on the way to school when it comes to the matter of mortification; indeed they seem to do considerably less mortification since our Lady's appeal than they did before in the stricter, if more puritanical, century preceding our own.

Is there any reason in these surmises of the observant Christian? On the face of it we must answer Yes. In 'the good old days' the Church insisted on a strict and easily comprehended set of rules of fast and abstinence throughout the forty days of Lent and on the other three sets of ember days as well as on certain vigils spread out across the year. Besides this common observance for all Christians there existed an army of religious men and women, headed by the Trappists and Carthusians, who were noted perhaps above everything else for the rigours of their life of mortification. Over and above all this there were the saints whose lives were dominated, at least in the eyes of their hagiographers, by the desire to reduce their flesh to mere skin and bone by constant fasts and harsh treatment such as sleeping on a bed of broken pots.

All this clearly defined practice seems to have given place to a wider and vaguer view of Christian self-denial in which the

initiative and the methods are left far more to the responsibility of the individual Christian. He finds himself with the burden of choice as to whether he should do penance and how he should do it. The reason for this change of emphasis appears to be that the present century has witnessed a return to hardships and sufferings which hitherto had been regarded as proper only to primitive and barbarous times. Wars and persecutions, a change in the constitution of most 'civilized' men, have made it increasingly difficult to legislate for the generality in a universal Church. There is perhaps less choice in the standard which a man may adopt in his living; he can only live according to the measure into which he is born, a measure that has little margin beyond the bare essentials of life. Of course this is by no means a universal state, since there are many who still live in comfort and even affluence; but the numbers of those who feel themselves almost on the edge of the subsistence level has considerably increased so that there would be more people who had to be dispensed from the laws of fasting than those who could observe them.

This state of affairs then leaves the larger number of Christians in what might be called a penitential situation, a condition of life which contains the suffering and hardships that are the materials of penance. It may be that our Lady's call to penance is addressed in a special manner to these people that, realizing the true nature of mortification, they may begin to transform these materials into penitential Christian living, so as to overcome the evils of our generation by turning them into part of the redemptive act of Christ. But the difficulty for so many Christians is that they do not realize the true nature of penance. They still consider it to be a question of 'giving-up' certain non-essentials, if not giving up two or more satisfying meals in the day, then giving up sweets or tobacco or sugar in their tea. Beyond this they think of special mortification in terms of disciplines, hair-shirts and chains or bitter herbs. And none of these things is essential to true Christian penance.

The word 'penance' has come to stand for quite a number of things and for that reason it is not always easy to recognize the essentials when we have to take the initiative at such times as the beginning of Lent or when we suddenly hear our Lady's call to penance as a personal demand upon ourselves. First of all the word may stand simply for the raw material already mentioned, the

actual suffering or hardship which of itself is not constructive of anything. Sufferings or deprivations are not virtuous and from the individual's part may be merely a passive state against which one may rebel. Poverty, for example, is an absence of good things rather than a good thing itself, and there are many who are restless and complaining under its burden. In this sense penance requires a positive attitude of mind and act of the will to convert it into part of the Christian way of perfection. This is another meaning of the word, an interior virtuous act which may perhaps be called 'penitence' or 'repentance', a sorrow for sins committed. St John the Baptist's call to penance was primarily a call to this interior repentance, demanding of his hearers that they should turn again towards God with a recognition of the error of their ways. Exteriorly, flowing from this virtuous interior penitence, penance can mean the satisfaction undertaken by the penitent in making amends for his sins, the fasts and abstinences, the prayers and self-inflicted hardships which are imposed by divine authority through the Church and the confessor or director. Voluntary mortifications—going without salt at meals, sleeping on the floor, wearing hair-shirts—these come under this heading of penitential exercises. But enclosing all the meanings of the word is the sacrament of Penance which requires the interior act of repentance, the exterior removal of sin through the priestly absolution and the acts of satisfaction which are imposed as an integral part of the sacrament. And no study of penance would be more profitable and all-embracing than that of this sacrament. Indeed, anyone wishing to understand our Lady's meaning or desiring to keep the spirit of Lent in the way the Church requires should meditate all the elements of the sacrament of penance, contrition, confession, satisfaction and absolution.

In every case the word 'penance' can only be understood in relation to sin. It is concerned in various ways with the destruction of sin. And that is surely at the root of our Lady's call—that in this sinful age all Christians should set their minds resolutely to destroy the evil. This destruction of sin implies, of course, first and foremost the turning away from evil and the cleaving to God that are essential elements in contrition and indeed in a true Christian life. But it implies, too, the willing acceptance of the fruits or physical effects of sin. It was through Adam's and Eve's first pride and disobedience that human hardships, sufferings and death came

into the world, and, as St Paul points out, the great act of penance on the Cross was essentially the willing, obedient acceptance of these effects by the Son of God, the second Adam. The Christian's penance is primarily that of continuing the work of redemption by the willing, obedient acceptance of the suffering and hardships that come to him in one way or another from the will of God but also from the results of men's evil ways. Thus, for example, every sin eventually has its repercussions on society, so that it is possible for a Christian to help to remove sins of injustice by accepting the poverty in which he finds himself as a result of this injustice on the part of other people. A man may assist in redeeming the sins that have led to war by embracing the pain and insecurity of the effects of war. This is surely the basic element of Christian penance, not first to look about for ways of, even temporarily, increasing one's own discomforts and hardships, but first to take hold of those discomforts which are one's inescapable lot and to accept them voluntarily, thereby converting them from a negative evil into a positive way of establishing the good, virtuous Christian life.

Care must, however, be taken to keep true perspective; for the principal means of abolishing sin is the act of the love of God, Christian charity. Love alone can effectively and finally remove sin and its effects; and no willing acceptance of hardship will achieve anything without this positive virtue. We all recognize the futility of 'offering up' the unpleasant things of life in a spirit of sour bitterness or merely stoical indifference. Penance is so often rendered ineffectual through the lack of love. People who put up with their poverty while they hate the human society which has brought it about only succeed in drying up their own souls till there is nothing left within them but an acid which corrodes everything about them. That is not penance. The first call of every Christian at the beginning of Lent is to an increase of love, and with love then to transform the hardships and pains of the time into the work of redemption. Prayer and penance are thus combined and our Lady's express wish fulfilled.

MONACHORUM NORMA

A Sketch of St Hugh of Lincoln

HUGH FARMER, O.S.B.

THE first Carthusian saint to be formally canonized by the Holy See was not their founder St Bruno but our own St Hugh, Bishop of Lincoln from 1186 till 1200. His achievements as a bishop and the historical importance of his resistance to kings have sometimes led writers to underemphasize the fact that he owed to his monastery the training which made him what he was—a saint whose austere and fearless strength was tempered by a gentleness which is one of the finest fruits of charity. The life written shortly after his death by his chaplain, the Benedictine monk Adam of Eynsham, does justice to this fact, and, in spite of its omissions, it is one of the most accurate and detailed portraits in existence of a medieval saint.¹

Born in 1140 of a noble family at Avalon near Grenoble, Hugh was neither an Englishman nor a Frenchman by birth, but an Empire man. He was brought up from childhood after his mother's death in a neighbouring house of canons at Villarbenoit, where his father had retired to dedicate his last years to the Religious Life. In due time Hugh was professed as a canon, but in spite of marked success in preaching and in the care of a small parish while still a deacon, he followed a call to the monastic life that seemed irresistible and became a monk at the Grande Chartreuse at the age of about twenty-three. His monastic formation was certainly the dominant influence of his life; and the inspiration of his inner life of prayer and self-immolation which bore fruit in his tireless and charitable zeal as a bishop must be sought in the contemplative life of the Grande Chartreuse.

When Hugh joined the community, it was already known for its fervour, its poverty and its fine library. The Carthusian ideal, inspired by St Bruno and codified by Guigo I, consisted in a blend of the eremitical and cenobitical lives that was a new creation

¹ *Magna Vita Sancti Hugonis Lincolniensis*. Rolls Series 1864. Other sources are the Life by Giraldus Cambrensis (R. S. Opera Omnia vol. 7 R.S.) the Metrical Life (Lincoln 1860) the canonization report (basis of the *Legenda*—see Giraldus vol. 7. Appendix) and references in the *Chronicles*. A new edition of the *Magna Vita* is being prepared by Miss D. L. Douie and the present writer.

although composed of traditional elements. The remote situation in wild mountain country assured a separation from the world that was almost complete, ideal for the pursuit of the monastic occupations of liturgical and private prayer, sacred reading and manual work. Each monk lived and worked alone for most of the day in a separate cell, but each day the principal Hours were performed by the whole community in the church, and on Sundays and feasts meals were taken in common. Besides the usual monastic vows of obedience, *conversio morum* and stability, the Carthusian austerities included the use of the hairshirt, complete abstinence from meat, and frequent fasting on bread and water.

Hugh's fidelity to prayer which vivified this austere observance did not prevent him from taming squirrels and birds to share his meals and eat from his hand, and his great interest in books was combined with a tender care for the sick and the aged. Like other authentically 'Incarnational' contemplatives he delighted to serve his neighbour, and although the Carthusians renounced preaching by word of mouth, they nevertheless, in Guigo's phrase, preached the word of God with their hands by making books. The spectacle of a community dedicated entirely to the service of God through liturgical prayer is also an efficacious preaching in every age of the Church's history.

The first Carthusian house in England had been started by Henry II at Witham in Somerset in 1178 as part of his reparation for the martyrdom of St Thomas of Canterbury. Soon after, it seemed to be on the point of failure. The first superior, a holy but impractical man, was not equal to the pioneer work involved, and a second died shortly after his appointment. In addition Henry had failed to provide the necessary and promised funds. At this point, with the small community living in wattle huts and very dispirited by the foreign food and the cold attitude of the local inhabitants, a nobleman of Maurienne recommended that Henry should ask for Hugh to be sent. He was now procurator at the Grande Chartreuse, and his duties included the care of guests as well as the government of the laybrothers' separate house besides all the temporal administration of the monastery. In spite of his protests that he was unfit for such an office, he was sent at once and rapidly transformed Witham into a flourishing monastery that was known throughout southern England for its fervour. The Carthusian life soon attracted such outstanding recruits as the

prior and sacrist of Winchester cathedral priory, who had probably come into touch with Hugh through his generous return to them of the magnificent Winchester Bible which Henry had commandeered as a gift to Witham. Such disinterestedness was typical of one whose first care on arriving there had been the double compensation of its former inhabitants, and his actions verified the nobleman's description of him as one whom 'none would shun as a foreigner but whom all would welcome as a friend and a brother, for he cherishes all in the arms of charity'.

Hugh's care for the needs of the brethren brought him into close touch with the king, but his position of dependence did not prevent him from reproving the king for prolonging episcopal vacancies to the profit of the royal Exchequer and the detriment of the dioceses concerned. Henry's improvement in this respect during the last years of his reign and the unexpected generosity of his will may perhaps be traced to Hugh's influence over him in spiritual matters which was said to be greater than that of any of his subjects. Henry's esteem for the prior of Witham was increased still further when he was saved from death by shipwreck, as he believed, through Hugh's merits and prayers, and he then vowed to make him a bishop.

In 1186 the large and populous diocese of Lincoln, which extended from the Humber to the Thames, fell vacant, and the canons, summoned by Henry to elect at a council at Eynsham, presented three of their own body as candidates. Although each of them was a royal servant, Henry refused them all, and, supported by the archbishop of Canterbury, insisted that the canons should elect Hugh. He however refused to accept an election that seemed so forced, and the canons returned to Lincoln, but so impressed were they by his holiness that they again elected him and quite freely this time. Hugh then appealed to the prior of the Grande Chartreuse, only to be told to accept the charge. It was to be the only time in English history when a Carthusian would be promoted to a bishopric.

Although he was to show the virtues of a bishop to a superlative degree, Hugh remained all his life first and foremost a faithful Carthusian who delighted to continue his monastic life as far as his episcopal duties allowed. He was tireless in consecrating churches and confirming children, and each day he would have read to him the books which he would have read in his monastery.

At dinner he would remain in deep recollection even when he had invited minstrels to entertain his guests; and after telling his clerics and servants to 'eat well, drink well, and serve God well', he would content himself with abstinence fare while they consumed the vast quantity of meat that was customary in episcopal households. On his long and frequent journeys Hugh was often so lost in prayer that his horse, no longer controlled by the reins, followed the horse in front and sometimes took the wrong road. Hugh's favourite journey was his annual visit to Witham in the autumn for a month's retreat, and his face would be radiant with joy when he approached it. By special delegation of the General Chapter he retained jurisdiction over the monastery which owed so much to him.

The example of a bishop whose life was wholly devoted to the service of Christ and his members, especially the poor, the oppressed and the lepers, was particularly needed at a time when bishops were excessively concerned with temporal matters and often remained the royal servants they had been before their consecration. Hugh's vigorous fight against every kind of superstition and simony, like his better-known refusal to surrender any part of the Church's rights to the Plantagenet kings, proceeded from a deep supernatural sense of the stewardship over the church of our Lady of Lincoln that had been entrusted to his care. Inspired by the example of his favourite St Martin and of his old friend St Peter of Tarentaise, he played a notable part in the struggle for the Church's independence of State control which was still such a vital issue of the day. The courage which Hugh displayed when facing unarmed mobs of armed rioters who tried to kill him in anti-Jewish riots enabled him to resist tenaciously such royal exactions as Henry's attempt to obtain the appointment of a courtier to an ecclesiastical office, or Richard I's claims to the patronage of Eynsham Abbey, to the sending of Lincoln knights overseas, or to the services of the canons of Lincoln in the royal diplomatic service. In all these matters Hugh successfully vindicated the rights of his See, and both kings, of whom Hugh was genuinely fond in spite of their faults, found his combination of courage, humour and directness quite irresistible.

Hugh's conduct of these cases was not his only contribution to English history. A permanent achievement of his administrative ability was the rebuilding of Lincoln cathedral which had been

damaged in an earthquake shortly before his election. Hugh chose the new style of architecture for his choir and transepts, which survive in large part, but his unique apsidal eastern end was removed to build the Angel Choir. His canonization report mentions that he actually took part in the building operations, carrying stone and cement in a builder's hod that was instrumental in the cure of a cripple. To help pay the building costs Hugh founded a brotherhood to contribute the considerable sum of 100 marks a year, and he exhorted the faithful to contribute Pentecostal offerings for the same purpose. Detailed accounts of his diocesan administration have not survived, but he avoided temporal business as far as possible, delegating it to stewards, whom he removed from office if they were found to be incompetent.

If he was largely successful in escaping the care of financial matters, he was not able to escape the almost equally irksome judicial duties. Absolutely incorruptible and quite fearless of the powerful, he was specially esteemed by poor clients who knew their cause was just. These qualities together with his keen legal acumen, which was the wonder of trained lawyers, led to his being frequently chosen by the popes in cases of national importance even when the archbishops of Canterbury and York were parties. And Hugh's ability was so much appreciated by Pope Innocent III that when he asked permission to resign his See and retire to a monastery, Innocent not only refused to hear of it but also severely snubbed the messengers he had sent.

Hugh's legal skill was not only the result of intuition but also, as he himself said, of his careful study of the customs of the realm. It is likely that he would have had some knowledge of Canon Law with the Carthusians, whose library lists testify to the great breadth of their intellectual interests. His monastic formation, however, led him towards a greater interest in theology than in Canon Law, and during his episcopate he established a school of theology at Lincoln under William de Montibus, who was one of those clerics of sound learning and good character whom Hugh was at such pains to acquire for his diocese. During his lifetime, according to Giraldus Cambrensis, the Lincoln schools were second only to Paris, where also Hugh was acclaimed as a patron of students second only to St Nicholas. But it is safe to say that the Bible was his book of predilection, and Giraldus, who described him as *litteratissimus*, credited him with the feat of being able to

complete from memory any sentence of the Bible which another had begun.

The only writings of St Hugh that have survived are some official documents, but elements of his teaching have been preserved for us. Unlike certain apologists for the monastic life, St Hugh could not be accused of teaching that it was the only way of salvation. 'When God will finally judge everyone he will not require that each should have been a monk or a hermit, but whoever has failed to be a true Christian will be condemned. Three things are required from every Christian, and if one of these be lacking when he is judged, the name of Christian will be of no profit to him. The name indeed without the reality would rather harm his case because falsehood is more blameworthy in one who makes profession of the Truth. Charity in the heart, truth on the lips and chastity in the body: these are all necessary to be a true Christian in act.' Married people who lived chastely according to their state, he taught, would attain to the same happiness in Heaven as monks and nuns. He would sometimes invite married women to his table and exhort them to a greater love of God 'who had conferred a wonderful dignity and honour on all women; for while no man was allowed to be or to be called God's father, a woman was given the privilege of being the Mother of God'.

In the last year of his life, Hugh visited the Grande Chartreuse and his old home at Avalon and stayed for a few days at Cluny and Cîteaux on the way. He fell ill on his way back in September 1200 and was carried to his London house, where he lingered for two months. Although he was dying he was vigorous to the last, correcting mistakes in the singing of the Divine Office, giving detailed instructions about his funeral, and chiding Archbishop Hubert Walter with his customary intransigence when he tried to make him apologize for their past differences.

After confessing his sins and receiving Viaticum, Hugh said: 'Now let my doctors and my illness fight it out; from now on I care little for either of them. . . . I have received him to whom it is good to cleave . . . he who receives him is indeed safe and sound.' During Compline on November 16, still wearing his hairshirt, he was laid on a bed of ashes according to Carthusian custom, and he died during the *Nunc Dimittis*. At his own request his body was dressed in the simple vestments he had chosen for his consecration fourteen years before, and was buried in the chapel

of St John the Baptist in Lincoln cathedral. In spite of the muddy streets, his funeral resembled a triumphal procession and it was attended by two kings, seventeen archbishops and bishops and more than a hundred abbots; an event commemorated by a thirteenth-century stained glass window in Lincoln cathedral. Such a splendid funeral was appropriate for one who had been so zealous in burying the dead that he preferred to keep a king waiting for his dinner rather than omit or delegate the burial of a poor man.

Partly because of the interdict during John's reign it was not until 1219 that Honorius III appointed a commission headed by Stephen Langton to enquire into Hugh's life and miracles. The canonization was announced on 17th February, 1220, and St Hugh's feast was appointed to be kept on 17th November. On 6th October, 1280, in the presence of the King and Queen and of Archbishop Pecham, the body was translated to a new shrine in the Angel Choir which was a centre of pilgrimage until the Reformation. The most interesting relic of St Hugh that has survived is his long white linen stole, woven with a small all-over pattern but without further decoration, which is a treasured possession of St Hugh's Carthusian brethren at Parkminster in Sussex.

St Hugh is generally represented in iconography with his swan, which was so tame to him and so fierce to all intruders during the saint's visits to his manor at Stow; but paintings are also to be found of him at Mass holding the Infant Jesus in his hands in front of the chalice in memory of a vision seen by a young Oxford student, Edmund, who became a monk at Eynsham where he saw a famous vision of the next world. As St Hugh's feast was of a very high rank in the Carthusian Order, pictures of him are to be frequently found in Continental Charterhouses: among these may be mentioned that at Paris which was often visited in the sixteenth century by the mothers of sick children. The cures obtained there show that St Hugh's affectionate interest in little children which was characteristic of him during his life did not cease after his death. A fourteenth-century statue of him, formerly on the tower of St Mary's, Oxford, is now to be seen in the cloisters of New College.

Such works of art are evidence of esteem and veneration for St Hugh, who should be reckoned as one of the most attractive of our English saints. His character was summarized by his contemporary John of Leicester in these words: *Pontificum baculus, monachorum norma, scholarum consultor, regum malleus Hugo fuit.*

AN OPEN LETTER

To any recent convert from Anglo-Catholicism who thinks
he may have a Carthusian vocation

PETER F. ANSON

Dear Fellow Convert,

I AM writing this letter at the request of the Prior of Parkminster. He seems to think that because I 'went over to Rome' more than forty years ago and decided that I had a Carthusian vocation even before I ceased to be in communion with Canterbury, I might be able to explain to you, better than he can do, why all converts, especially recent ones, should recognize that the Carthusian life is in the literal sense an extraordinary and abnormal one; and whilst it is most admirable to fall in love with the golden heights, no one dare take this thing to himself unless God calls him. This is just common-sense. God does not call the world as a whole by abnormal ways. Few men have the vocation to climb Mount Everest. Perhaps it has never struck you that at the present time there are less than six hundred Carthusian monks in the whole world, of which the Catholic population is reckoned to be about 423,000,000? These figures are enough to prove that a Carthusian vocation is only granted to a tiny élite.

As I have never met you I cannot be certain if, like myself, you had the feeling that reception into the Holy Roman Church was really nothing much more than walking out of one room into another, because the furniture and decorations are more or less the same. I hope that this has not been so and that you have already seen with complete clearness the vital differences between the Church of England and the Church of Rome. Strange to say, the extreme Protestant often has a clearer conception of these basic differences than the average Anglo-Catholic. Not to have this conception fairly clear at the outset is to court trouble later on. What I become convinced of the longer I am a Papist is that conversion, i.e. the change of allegiance from the authority of Canterbury to that of Rome, is not an instantaneous event effected by the abjuration of heresy, a profession of faith, and baptism, conditional or unconditional. I agree with a holy Carthusian monk, now dead, who used to say that we are lucky if we

are converted when we come to die, and he used to add: even after. Our conversion merely begins with our formal reception into the Fold of Peter. It continues until we have received the Last Sacraments, and probably after this in Purgatory.

It is quite possible that, like myself, you were an Anglican Papalist who frequented Roman Catholic services almost as much as those of the Church of England, and were as familiar with the *Missale Romanum* as with the *Book of Common Prayer*? Maybe you were accustomed to the use of the Roman or Benedictine Breviaries? Perhaps you took it for granted that there was no need for you to be given any formal instruction before you were received into the *Sancta Ecclesia Romana*? Speaking for myself, I would have been almost insulted if any priest had suggested that I ought to study the 'penny Catechism' or that any 'cradle Catholic' could teach me anything. It is possible that, even now, you tend to look down on the Catechism as a kind of potted theology, quite useful in its place, but extremely inadequate. I dare say that you would explain that because you found your way into the Holy Roman Church and absorbed the Faith on a higher level, e.g. by active participation in the Divine Office and the Liturgy, meditation on the Scriptures, and the study of St Thomas Aquinas, you have no patience with what you regard as little more than substitutes for true religion? Or again, it could be that the basic reason for wanting to become a Carthusian is because you are convinced that the monastic life is the norm of Catholic faith and devotion, therefore the only logical thing for you to do is to waste no time in the truncated form of Catholicism which you feel exists in modern parochial religion, but rush into what your intellect believes is the most perfect expression of Christian living?

You must forgive me for being reminiscent, but by recalling some incidents in my own life-story I can make myself clearer. A brief visit to Parkminster before I entered the novitiate of the Anglican Benedictine community on Caldey Island had infected me with Carthusian microbes. No sooner had I been received into the Catholic Church in 1913 than I was determined to test my vocation to the Carthusian life. I was told that it was a little unbecoming for one so recently converted, and reminded that it was risky to offer myself to a specialized form of Catholic and religious life without a period of waiting and a preliminary test.

But I refused to be convinced. Eventually the then Prior of Parkminster agreed to allow me to spend four weeks in a cell, my Superiors at Caldey hoping that this would cure my restlessness.

Looking back forty-one years I wonder how I could have been so stupid, but there will always be children who try to run before they can have learned to walk, and I was one of them. It never struck me in the summer of 1913 that I was merely an infant in the nursery of God's Church. I took it for granted that I was already a full-grown adult. After this month's trial of Carthusian life I returned to Caldey, still unconvinced. It was not until about eleven years later, when I had reverted to lay-life, that I began to acquire the elements of what might be called a 'Catholic mentality'. This gradual initiation was the result of close contacts with ordinary Catholic layfolk in various parts of Europe—Glasgow-Irish, French fishermen and sailors, '*contadini*' in Tuscany and Umbria, plain outspoken Catholic families in the industrial towns of the north of England, and others in remote parts of Scotland where the 'Old Religion' had managed to persist after the Reformation. Very slowly and almost unconsciously deeply-rooted 'Protestant inhibitions' disappeared, until at long last it dawned on me that when I made my submission to the Holy See of Rome I had little more than a vague and distorted conception of Catholic life and practice. Or, to put it differently, I had put the cart before the horse. I had got my sense of values all wrong. I really did believe that nobody could claim to be a 'proper Catholic' unless he or she joined a Religious Community, preferably one of the strictly enclosed and purely contemplative Orders.

At the age of sixty-five I can see much more clearly that, like many another convert—possibly yourself?—my urge for solitude was a partly subconscious running *away* from something, not a running *after* something. My motives for wanting to become a Carthusian were negative rather than positive. Now the Carthusian life is most definitely not a way of escape from the ugly realities of contemporary life in the world—noise, crowds, worry, and—dare one say so?—close contacts with the majority of our co-religionists whom we may not find altogether sympathetic or congenial. The Carthusian life is, and always has been, not a form of escapism but the vocation of a very small minority of Catholics. Do you really believe that you are one of these picked men who possess the requisite mental and bodily qualifications? Remember,

too, that it is a most inelastic and rigid form of monastic observance, which cannot be modified to suit an individual. Has it struck you that only a mere handful of the countless converts who have sought admittance to the novitiate at Parkminster during the past seventy years has persevered? 'Neither do they put new wine into old bottles.' Carthusian bottles are very old; that is why they are not suitable for new wine, i.e. converts.

The difficulties which would confront you sooner or later are psychological as well as physical, difficult to explain because they are so subtle and elusive, though largely because you do not happen to be a 'cradle Catholic'.

So I would urge you, should it be practical, to postpone the moment and familiarize yourself with normal Catholic life in the world before you think of experimenting with the abnormal. I may be wrong, but I have the feeling that it is unwise for any convert to enter a Carthusian novitiate until he is firmly convinced that the man or woman in the street is capable of the same union with God by saying the Rosary, making the Stations of the Cross, dropping into the last Mass on a Sunday morning, and just managing to make his or her Easter duties, as an enclosed monk who chants the Divine Office in choir, and who has a profound knowledge of mystical theology.

It is impossible for any human being to measure the height or depth of holiness; these will only be revealed at the Last Judgment, I suppose. Only God knows what is going on in the heart, and also *how much it costs*, or may cost, to be an ordinary Catholic and follow the normal routine. It may cost a person comparatively little to become a Carthusian, though I doubt if that is ever possible; but it certainly may cost them a great deal more to be 'just ordinary'. The best place to hide a pebble is on the beach, and it would be a funny beach if all the pebbles took to their heels and went into enclosed monasteries! To sum up: it is not until one is humbly and deeply conscious how close to 'the heart of the matter' the poor, humble Catholic in the world is—that one dare think even of contemplating life in the cloister, much less leading it. One must so *love the world* that one *gives one's life for it*. The apostolic vocation is at the root of everything, and, oddly enough, without a deep sense of it, few men have ever persevered as Carthusians.

Granted that you may be called to the contemplative life rather

than to the active, it could well be that you will find it in the world and not in any enclosed monastery. For material solitude is not an essential to leading a contemplative life; it can be an obstacle. There are more and more men and women today who are discovering this fact; finding that *their* way to God lies in a factory, on the land, or in other jobs which lack the external glamour and romance of a venerable Monastic Order founded in the early Middle Ages, but where the obedience can be perhaps more rigid and the poverty harder to endure. There are the increasing number of new Congregations and Secular Institutes which make provision for leading a contemplative life in the midst of the world. But there are other ways of seeking solitude to souls whom God has not chosen for the way of marriage or the cloister; to a vocation of their own, wider in a sense than either of the others, 'more unselfish, carrying perhaps never a reward on this side of death. . . . These are the fairy godmothers of their surroundings, sharing their limited time and money with the younger folk who turn to them when they despair of their own homes. And some share not time nor money only, but what is more blessed, a silent sympathy. They are God's silent, eloquent ones, who listen to the grumbles of those who have none to whom they dare tell them at home. . . . These others are silent, they just listen, and they become almost the confessors of the community where they live. People will go to them, but don't always remember to return with gratitude. . . . There is no life lonelier than the soul's that has had to live through the world in single blessedness, unlimited by walls of cloister or home, touching wider margins, yet on that account more alone. . . . God knows what He is about. He gives to every soul a capacity, brings them souls that they can manage, whose lives they can refashion and send back remade.'¹ So it could be that you will find the solitude you are seeking, not in a Carthusian cloister but by another road which you have not yet thought of. There are so many ways that lead to God, that it is wiser to make sure, so far as is humanly possible, that one has taken the right road, and is not obliged to turn back afterwards.

May you be guided aright.

Yours devotedly,

PETER F. ANSON

¹ Bede Jarrett, O.P., *The House of the Lord*, p. 130.

THE WRITER'S PREDICAMENT IN A SCIENTIFIC AGE*

HUGH DINWIDDY

THE power of the writer is a transforming power. It is in operation from the day he weaves fables round the playthings of his nursery, and it is the power which vitally penetrates, which re-incarnates the raw material of his world. And his world is that small part of creation which he knows, and which, in knowing, he manages to love. Today, as he looks out upon the expanding universe which science has prepared for him, he has to find a centre in himself round which he can wrap his belief in *human* values. Facing him is a world living numbly, automatically, on the sanitary, progressive, anti-theistic, hence anti-human, thinking of the recent scientific past. It is upon this mass-produced, disinfected world that the writer is called to exercise his transforming power. Here, amid the disguised cruelty of routine he must kindle the spark of life. Here, though every day he watches 'the dwarfing of man' in the perspective of machinery and light years, he must, no matter what his religion, affirm his faith in the uniqueness of man, 'heir to all the ages'. For, as St Thomas wrote, 'the soul of man is in the world, containing it, rather than being contained by it'. This, indeed, is the primal condition of man's transforming power, and it is from this that writers, whether we are thinking of Coleridge's 'esemplastic power' of the imagination or of Maritain's 'creative intuition', derive their inner power to unify experience.

This, too, is the very core of man's sense of wonder from which springs his need to inquire into and to make manifest to his generation his soul's inheritance. In one of Leonardo da Vinci's Notebooks, he describes an incident when he was hunting for prehistoric bones in a lonely mountain cave, and he wrote:

'There awakened in me two emotions, fear and desire, fear of the dark threatening cavern and desire to see whether there were within it any marvellous thing'.

His fervent desire to find the bones overcame his fear, and thus led him, by way of observed fact, to a deeper understanding of Natural Law. Here, for the moment, the scientific inquirer has

*A Paper read at the LIFE OF THE SPIRIT Conference, Spode House, September 1954.

freed the imaginative artist from his fears, and has provided him with further material to transform into art. Yet it is seldom, in an artist or writer, that the ghosts of 'the dark threatening cavern' can be laid to rest until they are made manifest in his work. No purely scientific demonstration or assurance is enough. From being dim fears, they come to be known, known because used creatively, and thus transformed. Though they may still be potent they are humanized, tamed even, by being given a 'local habitation and a name'. In this light we may think of the grotesque heads of Leonardo, and certainly of Graham Greene's treatment of Gagool, the witch in *King Solomon's Mines*, who waited for him 'in dreams every night in the passage by the linen cupboard, near the nursery door'. She has not yet been put to rest, and he writes of her:

'Wasn't it the incurable fascination of Gagool with her bare yellow skull, the wrinkled scalp that moved and contracted like the hood of the cobra, that led me to work all through 1942 in a little stuffy office in Freetown, Sierra Leone? . . . Once I came a little nearer to Gagool and her witch-hunters, one night at Zigita on the Liberian side of the French Guinea border, when my servants sat in their shattered hut with their hands over their eyes and someone beat a drum and a whole town stayed behind closed doors while the big bush devil—whom it would have been blindness to see—moved between the huts'.¹ Out of the nothingness of the night, this personification of fear arose and it protects itself from all observation by the curse of blindness. It is safer not to look. Yet the writer whose work is to make human even terror has to find a means of approaching this spectre of nothingness, which he knows to be not only in the jungle but in the factory, the offices and the homes of modern living. It is lurking behind the silent and impassive dynamos of applied science, and all the efficient apparatus of modern living is for ever cleaning away fear. *There is nothing here for the creative mind to rest in.* And this, quite simply, is the key to the writer's predicament. Quantity has made stale our sense of wonder, and the nothingness of comfort has stifled the poetry in us.

In the land of lobelias and tennis flannels
The rabbit shall burrow and the thorn revisit,
The nettle shall flourish on the gravel court,

1 *The Lost Childhood*, pp. 14, 15.

And the wind shall say: 'Here were decent godless people
 Their only monument the asphalt road
 And a thousand lost golf balls'.²

In the face of this, and against the conspiracy of blindness, irony is the main approach to his subject that the writer is compelled to take. He stands, with mirror and with pen in hand, saying to all his readers, 'See what I see: This is the world you live in: Note well, in this age of progress, how idealism is married to scepticism, for there is the split which makes all significant living so difficult. Unless you can find a new relation to your world of people and machines you will continue to destroy innocence by *not* looking at the nothingness upon which it is being fed.'

Indeed, every writer who goes out to meet the modern mechanical civilization, as genuine novelists and dramatists must do who hope for a hearing by the workaday world, unavoidably uses the weapon of irony to communicate and to transform his material. It is interesting to consider, in contrast, writing that is, for the most part, without the transformation into significance, but which is highly successful in the modern situation. It is the kind of reportage that has so hugely increased the sales of the *Daily Mirror* which began life by being 'the first daily newspaper for gentlewomen' on 2nd November, 1903.

'The relation between reader and newspaper became more intimate', Hugh Cudlipp writes in *Publish And Be Damned!* 'tantalizing problems of the heart were much in favour.' And here follow two examples from two correspondents:

'My wife sometimes complains that I leave unfinished some splendidly cooked meals. It would no doubt surprise her to know that she is the cause by continually smacking her lips while masticating food. It nearly drives me to distraction.'

He signs himself 'Worried', and the other is from 'Dismayed'.

'While courting I was very dissatisfied by the shape of my nose. I drew out my savings for a 25-guinea facial operation. Not a word of this did I breathe to my lover. To my horror he did not notice the difference.'

The irony is there in both instances but the 'thing hidden' is only fully visible to an observer, perhaps a writer, for whom this kind of thing, so puny yet so pathetic, is the raw material upon which his transforming dramatic power has to work. We are told

frequently by Mr Cudlipp and others that this is the century of the common man who has a right to be told the truth. Journalists have to get down to his level; thus Cyril James, one of the paper's provocative writers, contributed a piece entitled 'And When I Die' with an illustration showing a tombstone with the inscription:

Here lies Cyril James—He never
knowingly harmed another, but
died in the firm belief that he had
not mattered.

Here, in strict parody form, is the ultimate picture of the writer 'identifying himself with his subject' . . . in a world of anonymous power.

Yet, behind all that is written of the common man, lies the supreme irony that he is made in the image of God and does *not* know it. The blind spot in him makes him amenable to fact but not to value, or perhaps what we should say is that he turns his values into facts. The oft repeated: 'It's not right: That's a fact', reveals this tendency. The disinclination of the common man to have any other criterion of judgment *beyond* the self-enclosing fact is the chief problem the writer has to face in his approach to him. The apparent value judgment: 'It does, or it does not pay', is in origin, and more often than not in use, a factual monetary judgment. The common man is closed in by a chain of facts which he can quote but does not understand, and, in this unsatisfying mental climate, the only relation a fact has is to the one that follows it. Fact follows fact: event follows event, and London is the 'time-kept city'. And this is the outcome of the experimental scientific method which, on the practical social level, is governed by the evolving laws of supply and demand, and on the human level, by a slowly changing state of mind whose unreflective judgment is loaded by the experience of 'what pays'. Yet like Joseph Pieper, neither I, nor any writer, has any intention whatsoever to denigrate this world as though from some supposedly superior 'philosophical' standpoint . . . it is indeed 'part of man's world, being the very ground of his physical existence—without which, obviously, no one could philosophize!'³ It is that which is the raw material for modern literature.

The writer has to transform these facts and events into meaning,

³ 'Leisure the Basis of Culture': *The Philosophical Act*, p. 93.

but he is nowadays faced with so many facts and events that he must find a point of detachment from which he can escape being overwhelmed by them . . . from which he can make his selection. Though he may not be as sensitive as Keats, yet, in a heightened degree, he suffers the pain of the pressure of identity, and he may find that he, like James Joyce, and others cannot come to terms with his subject unless he is living in exile from it. In all ages, this point of detachment is a difficult one for the writer to find, but at no time has it been more difficult to hold than in the present age. I have spoken of the writer finding 'a centre in himself round which he can wrap his belief in human values', and so strongly does he now have to hold on to this that either it, or its opposite, may become an obsession to him. Thus we can speak of Graham Greene's obsession about the seediness of modern life and the lost innocence of childhood.

Yet when we speak of human values, it is important to say we are speaking entirely subjectively and thinking of the array of values a man attaches to what fills or does not fill his life. These and what others think of them is the very pith of literature. Indeed, it is only now that the term 'value' has been isolated from truth, from metaphysical reality, and stands in danger of being inundated by quantity that writers speak about it so tensely. It is in the face of a freedom lost to the machine that the writer clings to his faith in human value. All activities of town life conspire to rate man as a machine. One of the highest compliments that can be paid to a football team is to record that it played like a beautiful machine.

'The modern wife and mother', writes Margaret Mead, 'lives alone, with a husband who comes home in the evening, and children, who as little children are on her hands twenty-four hours out of twenty-four, in a house that she is expected to run with the efficiency of a factory—for hasn't she a washing-machine and a vacuum cleaner? . . . As our factories move towards the ideal of eliminating human labour, our home ideals have paralleled them; the successful home-maker today should always look as if she had neither done any work nor would have to do any; she should produce a finished effect effortlessly . . . the creativity that is expected of her is a creativity of management of an assembly-line, not of materials lovingly fashioned into food for children. She shops, she markets, she chooses, she transports, she integrates, she

co-ordinates, she fits little bits of time together so as "to get through the week", and her proudest boast often has to be "It was a good week. Nothing went wrong."⁴

'If man is thought of on the model of a machine', writes Marcel, 'it is quite according to the rules and it conforms to the principles of a healthy economy that when his output falls below the cost of his maintenance and when he is "not worth repairing" (that is, not worth sending to hospital) because the cost of patching him up would be too much of a burden in proportion to any result to be expected from it, it is quite logical that he should be sent to the scrap heap like a worn out car.'⁵

He is writing of the insane logic of the Nazi's occupation, and it is against this, on its many levels, that the genuine writer would protect man, and it is from these cold depths that the Christian must begin to help forward the work of creative redemption in the world. For man's two chief modern temptations away from being human are to become either an animal or a machine, and frequently the one will have a compulsive effect upon the other. In half a sentence from *The Heart of the Matter* we find Scobie steeling himself against becoming an animal, by becoming in the eyes of the author machine-like, in a situation in which he can *not* be truly human.

'[Scobie] lay coiled like a watch-spring on the outside of the bed, trying to keep his body away from Louise's.' . . .

It is difficult to realize how much of modern life goes on between these two extremes and how the one affects the other. Freud is thought to be the apostle of instinctive living and Marx the apostle of the machine and of mass living—and both have preached their doctrine in the name of man's freedom. To both it is the lower kinds of freedom that matter. Yet the Christian cry for redemption is always, at all times, 'out of the depths', and these *are* the twentieth-century depths. It is for the Christian writer to tune his ear to hear that cry, and it comes, if it comes, from the hidden, distorted, undeveloped and shrivelled heart of man.

'The man kept on speaking of his heart, but it seemed to Scobie that a long deep surgical operation would have been required to find it.'

⁴ *Male and Female*, p. 333.

⁵ *Men Against Humanity: The Crisis of Values*, p. 136.

'The heart', said Gerard Manley Hopkins, in a sermon on the Sacred Heart, 'expresses what goes on within the soul', and if a priest is doctor to the soul of man, the writer is doctor to his heart. He knows, as Mauriac writes of Rose Revolou in *The Unknown Sea*, 'The heart's despair is boundless as the sea.' The writer is the man with the gift of life to impart, and his way of imparting it is by transforming fact into what David Jones has called 'a valid sign'. Yet, in a scientific age, the many extensions of man's hand can not be known and felt directly by an author. In the preface to *In Parenthesis* he writes:

'It is not easy in considering a trench mortar barrage to give praise for the action proper to chemicals—full though it may be of beauty. . . . We doubt the decency of our own inventions and are certainly in terror of their possibilities. That our culture has accelerated every line of advance into the territory of physical science is well appreciated—but not so well understood are the unforeseen, subsidiary effects of this achievement . . . all requiring a new and strange direction of the mind, a new sensitivity certainly, but at a considerable cost.

'We who are of the same world of sense with hairy ass and furry wolf and who presume to other and more radiant affinities, are finding it difficult, as yet, to recognize these creatures of chemicals as true extensions of ourselves' . . .

Every day that science makes available new power to governments increases the difficulty of the writer. The signs of the times are valid for man, but only so that they bring the dwarfing shadow of death to him who has, for the most part, separated himself from his more radiant affinities, and wants merely to crawl into his grave 'in the firm belief that he had not mattered'.

On the level at which we have been speaking Henry Miller is a writer who brings out the bleeding tension between the natural animal in man and his machine-made existence. In a dream he sees man as a clam; closed-tight in mute uncomprehending anguish. But the writer has to do more than merely make a statement that man is a clam on the shore of the world, or a 'beetle' in a concentration camp; he has to make the sign valid, by making the depths of man's predicament real. Here is Henry Miller:

'Where is the warm summer's day when first I saw the green-carpeted earth revolving and men and women moving like panthers? Where is the soft gurgling music which I heard welling

up from the sappy roots of the earth? Where am I to go if everywhere there are trap-doors and grinning skeletons, a world turned inside out and all the flesh peeled off? . . . Everything is a lie, a fake. Paste-board. I walk along the ocean front. The sand is strewn with human clams waiting for someone to pry their shells apart. In the roar and hubbub their anguish goes unnoticed. The breakers club them. They lie behind the pasteboard street in the onyx-coloured night and they listen to the hamburgers sizzling.

'Jabber, jabber, a sneezing and a wheezing, balls rolling down the long smooth troughs into tiny little holes filled with bric-à-brac, with chinaware and spittoons and flower-pots and stuffed dolls. Greasy Japs wiping the rubber plants with wet rags, Armenians chopping onions into microcosmic particles, Macedonians throwing the lassos with molasses arms. Every man, woman and child in a mackintosh has adenoids, spreads catarrh, diabetes, whooping cough, meningitis. Everything that stands upright, that slides, rolls, tumbles, spins, shoots, teeters, sways and crumbles is made of nuts and bolts. The monarch of the mind is a monkey-wrench. Sovereign pasteboard power.'⁶

Between the extremities of machine living and of purely natural living is to be found all the inherent violence in modern writing. For man, a pilgrim upon the earth anyhow, and restless for eternity, must remain utterly unsatisfied by what he finds in modern Civilization. His lack of ease makes him almost desperate, so that escape into violence seems the *only* way of release. While the writer asks; 'Where am I to go if everywhere there are trap-doors and grinning skeletons, a world turned inside out and all the flesh peeled off?'

We have said that the writer is the life-bringer and that his problem is to find a position from which he can know and love mankind. There must be some reality, 'a beyond' from which he can observe and write, and the Christian writer, though he may search the depths, as other writers, is saved by his faith from the insanity of being seized and swallowed by them. Yet the writer stands in danger of being overwhelmed, swallowed up, not only by facts and events outside himself, but by the fears in his own mind, by the untamed images that prowl in his thoughts. For, as Walter de la Mare has written:

. . . In the forests of the mind

⁶ *The Cosmological Eye*, pp. 240, 241.

Lurk beasts as fierce as those that tread

Earth's rock-strewn wilds, to night resigned. . . .

And so whether we think of a tiger prowling in the forests of the night, or of Gagool, we know that the writer has, in some measure, to tame his material before he can use it, hence his power to transform presupposes a power to tame the apparently wild and intractable. From the day when he writes a story about the playthings in his nursery, thus saving them from oblivion, his work is one of creative redemption. He is redeeming fact by giving it significance, and by making it live he is affirming William Blake's principle that 'All life is holy'. In affirming this he is helping to protect man from himself and from the impersonal and voracious jaws of the machine. In the poem 'Eureka', Walter de la Mare has a dream that he is taken to the promised land of the machine:

Here God, the mechanist, reveals,
As only mechanism can,
Mansions to match the new ideals
Of his co-worker Man.

On strict probation, you are now
To toil with yonder bloodless moles—
These skiagrams will tell you how—
On mechanizing human souls. . . .

And he awakens in thankfulness from this absurdity to the creaturely world he knows.

The writer knows and cares for the heart of man, but we have been trying to show that there is much in modern life to prevent its natural, deep-rooted growth. All that inhibits this growth stands in the way of positive, hopeful writing, and we find that much that is difficult to understand in modern writing is difficult because it is trying, by devious and intricate ways, to penetrate to the heart, to touch the heart into life, to break through the defences which this traveller upon the earth has erected round himself. For Kafka, the dwarfing and unapproachable Castle is a pyramid of rationalization, in reality non-existent, but founded upon man's baseless sense of guilt. Modern psychology has given precision to the 'labyrinthine mind' of man, and the writer seeks to present it in its operation in the modern setting. Thus Mr Bloom, the common man, walking the streets of Dublin, is for

James Joyce a labyrinth walking *in* a labyrinth. Yet, while the writer is speaking of the 'levels of reality', of 'inner and outer reality', of the irony of having all things and yet possessing nothing, the journalist, missing the tragedy and the irony of triviality simplifies everything. The journalist knows only that he has a tough crust of resistance—the castle defences—to break through, and that man still responds to an appeal to his heart. And what he writes *may* bring out courageous action; it may bring a reverence for life. With picture and headline he knows, at least, how to get a hearing, for he has studied the mind of his reader. But the approach is so violent, like a pneumatic drill, that it shudders the heart stirring it towards the confusion of revenge. Under the heading 'WE DO NOT APOLOGISE' the *Daily Mirror* printed the following:

'Our picture of the starved and dying greyhound shocked you. Maybe it made some of you sick. If it did we are glad. It was good for you. We intended to shock you, and we shall shock you again and again if by doing so we can help to stamp out the wanton cruelty—so often born of thoughtlessness—that lives in Britain today. . . .

'Forty-six people wrote to complain about it. But only 4,800 letters of praise were received. It is pitiful to think that only 4,800 people were roused sufficiently out of their apathy to write to support us. We want you to join us in a great crusade to end cruelty.' This is a product of the much vaunted 'expanding sense of reality', of 'mass education', and is part of the campaign to show things up, which is a necessary corrective in society. Yet this is writing on a sub-human level, and is the kind of bludgeoning, simplified education some people give to animals. Aiming, as the present editor of the *Daily Mirror* writes, at making an 'impact on the mind of the reader', its effect is to stun him into further unconsciousness.

'By 2050', says Syme, in George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, 'the whole climate of thought will be different. In fact there will be no thought, as we understand it now. Orthodoxy means not thinking—not needing to think. Orthodoxy is unconsciousness.'

The writer knows that if 'reverence for life', the ordinary human sympathy between man and man and the creatures that serve him, is lost, it can only be regained by a slow revaluation of the processes of thought and feeling which have previously been

taken for granted. He perceives that the 'new sensitivity' deriving 'from the subsidiary effects of scientific achievement', of which David Jones wrote, while promising happiness and expanding consciousness, have, in truth, enclosed man in a labyrinthine self-consciousness, making him unobservant of reality and ego-tistical. Herein, on the human level, lies the irony behind all so called 'democratic responsibility'. Meanwhile, against the uncomprehending stream, the writer pursues his transforming work of restoring and redeeming human values. His work is a cry from the depths, from the heart, 'expressing what goes on within the soul'; it is life-bringing, a work of love and preparative to the redemption of Christ himself, the new Adam. As Edith Sitwell wrote, prophetically, to modern man in her poem 'The Shadow of Cain':

There are no thunders, there are no fires, no suns,
 no earthquakes
 Left in our blood. . . . But yet like the rolling thunders
 of all the fires in the world, we cry
 To Dives: 'You are the shadow of Cain. Your shade is
 the primal Hunger.'
 'I lie under what condemnation?'
 'The same as Adam, the same as Cain, the same as Sodom,
 the same as Judas.'

And the fires of your Hell shall not be quenched by
 the rain
 From these torn and parti-coloured garments of Christ,
 those rags
 That once were Men. Each wound, each stripe,
 Cries out more loudly than the voice of Cain—
 Saying 'Am I my brother's keeper?' Think! When the
 last clamour of the Bought and Sold
 The agony of Gold
 Is hushed. . . . When the last Judas-kiss
 Has died upon the cheek of the Starved Man Christ,
 these ashes that were Men
 Will rise again
 To be our Fires upon the Judgment Day,
 And yet—who dreamed that Christ has died in vain?
 He walks again on the Seas of Blood, He comes in the
 terrible Rain.

ADAPTATION IN FRANCE—IV

J. M. DUBOIS, O.P.

THE examination we have made of each of the three vows reveals at least in principle the various domains where problems of adaptation might be, and in fact are, posed. What we have noticed is sufficient to indicate in what directions their possible solutions lie.

Nevertheless, before concluding it would be interesting to consider certain of the most important dimensions of the religious life. As we have already spoken of observances in dealing with virginity, it will be enough to consider rapidly three kinds of cases particularly instructive: first of all prayer and silence; in the second place, formation and intellectual work; and finally questions of hierarchy and government.

PRAYER AND SILENCE

In all that concerns prayer and silence, it is clear that the life of the *ancelles*, or of any nun more or less involved in the world, as also the life of sisters in a secular institute, does not profit by the guarantees offered by a stable existence in a convent. The way in which they try to maintain, whatever it may cost, the pre-eminence of prayer, is a noble example of an adaptation guided by a sense of the essential.

Let us deal first with prayer in common. In spite of being so few, and of the lack of co-ordination in their occupations, and of the overwork of their lives, the *ancelles* insist on a minimum of prayer in common. Whatever happens, they maintain Lauds and Prime in the morning before Mass, and Compline in the evening at the end of the day, before solemn silence. The rest is said in private, except on holidays when the re-assembly of everyone at the house of formation allows the whole Office to be said in common and regulates the day around the liturgical hours, as in any other monastery. Thus the recitation of the Office throughout the year is adapted and reduced according to the conditions of a working life.

This prayer in common takes place in one of the rooms of the residence, although each hostel hopes sooner or later to possess an oratory.

There is another adaptation the need of which is being felt all over France, and with regard to which the *ancelles* like many other nuns of all Orders are groping for a solution, while things mature; the question of the nature of the Office. Like many nuns, under the growing influence of biblical and liturgical movements, they would like to say the Roman Breviary. But here they come up again the difficulty of its length, that of Matins in particular. And the question of the Latin is also a difficulty. Of course they would like to say the Office in French—or in Hebrew.

For the moment, anyhow, they have suppressed various traditional prayers of the Congregation which added their length and their weight to a prayer in common already sufficiently reduced. Likewise they abandoned various old-fashioned hymns which tradition considered almost sacrosanct. And all this not without hesitation or drama! They recite Compline in French instead of the former evening prayers, and they vary between the breviary and the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin according to the day. In addition they often organize biblical holy hours which help them to become more aware of their vocation.

However, in addition to Mass and Office, the *ancelles* are drawn towards a sufficiently long time of silent prayer, at least an hour daily according to their possibilities. This is an important point which cannot be stressed enough. It is the basis of the spirituality of many similar ventures, the sisters of Foucauld in particular. It is the essential of any apostolic life. A postulant without this longing for silent prayer would be considered as not having a vocation.

Clearly their difficulty is to find the place and the time for silence. The time-table of each residence makes what provision it can. Their Directory demands of the *ancelles* to keep to it whatever it may cost. It may happen that that is not enough, or that on a certain day such-and-such a sister can no longer find the presence of God even in silence because she is too tired, or too overwrought. This was foreseen, and a wider, more calming, system of silence than the simple daily rhythm was provided for. Thus every *ancelle* has one day of silence in her week; and a day of recollection every month gathers them all in the house of their formation. They spend a part of their holidays here, all together, what can be spared from holiday camps they direct or other occupations. In addition, when they feel the necessity it is always possible for them to ask for a few days rest, or even a few weeks or months, to

gather themselves together again in calm and silence, to find in prayer the distance necessary with regard to the cares of an apostolic life. Alongside the silence of rule they have thus adapted the rhythm of true silence against the rhythm of modern life. It is weekly, monthly, yearly. It is fitting that God's workmen should give their Lord the time that others give to their leisure, or their homes.

The same reversal of this rhythm has occurred in relation to silence in the refectory. It has not always been thus. The change-over was the object of a slow conquest, almost a revolution. This is what one of the sisters wrote to me: 'At the beginning we always maintained silence in the refectory, as in school. Having the same kind of work as people in the world, we left straight after meals, some to our training schools (nurses, social assistants, domestic workers), others to their jobs. The interval between the end of the meal and the departure was supposed to be spent in some religious exercise—examination of conscience, spiritual reading, Office. And so it was quite impossible to come together to exchange ideas, to talk about our work. We lived in community but we didn't have a community life! And because of that, nervous tension, individualism, clashes arose because of lack of contact on the human and fraternal level. We felt the necessity of a family atmosphere, and obtained permission to speak at meals.' It was difficult indeed to find a method of adaptation which would maintain the essential of the observance. At present the *ancelles* talk at meals. They even invite guests. But on every occasion they begin by reading the Rule, and finish with Holy Scripture even when they are entertaining Jews or unbelievers. They also talk over the washing-up. In fact, it is the only time when they can meet each other in relaxation, and as a family. The time which they would have given to recreation is spent during the day in moments of silence. In Lent, or on holiday when they can take their recreations normally, meals are in silence, and there is reading. Unless, of course, a guest is invited. Many other modalities in the practice of silence could be enumerated. The essential is to notice the constant care to maintain the reality of their silence in a form new and adequate to their circumstances. This is only possible if their souls are possessed by silence, radiating it, so to speak, from inside. It is another way of manifesting the two indispensable qualities we have already met more than once: a deep concern for a theological life, and a real religious seriousness.

Once again, *a propos* of silence and prayer, we have found the same need for religious and human maturity. That is the essential condition which allows for adaptation. Now there is a region where a whole series of adaptations has been undertaken most successfully—that which concerns the religious and the human formation of the sisters.

It is perhaps in this sphere that adaptation has been clearest and most decisive. It must be recognized that apart from one or two magnificent but rare exceptions the intellectual and religious formation of nuns leaves much to be desired. Often they were insufficiently prepared for their professional tasks; they knew nothing of many worldly affairs which an ordinary human being should know, and above all they were not sufficiently instructed about the glory of their creation and their place in the Church.

For some years now people have been aware of this lack, and have attempted to remedy it, first of all as regards superiors and novice mistresses, but also for the mass of nuns. This does not mean of course that the present generation is more intelligent and more enlightened than those who have gone before. From certain points of view it is in fact just the contrary! Nevertheless it is evident that, due to the evolution of the social structure and of the university system, young girls acquire a higher degree of culture than thirty years ago. They have learned, with more or less reason and security, expression and judgment, and once inside a convent they retain the taste and the need. This curiosity is not always a bad thing. On the other hand it is certain that the urgency of all kinds of questions raised in the modern world, scientific, moral, philosophic and above all religious questions invite the consideration of the serious-minded, and call for the means of formulating a methodic and definitive reform. It is only normal that contemplative souls and future apostles feel the need of exploring for themselves these questions and their answers. It was the duty of the Church and of religious orders to fulfil this need.

This concern with formation and information has developed in three directions—technical knowledge, knowledge of the world, and theological knowledge. To be brief, I will simply give a rapid sketch of the cycle of study such as has been conceived for the *anclles*. But here as elsewhere their particular case is only a

reflection of a general mentality. The instructions of the Holy Father at the congress of Mother Generals in 1952 encountered in France a territory already prepared, and encouraged desires which were only asking to be encouraged.

With reference to the *ancelles* whom we have taken as example, when a postulant enters it will be about five years before she goes out into an apostolate, her formation finished. This period is even longer when in addition to her religious formation she has to undertake a special preparation for a job, such as social worker or nurse.

The years are spent in general more or less like this: A year's postulancy, very free, during which the sister comes into contact with the various residences in order to learn from living experience the different aspects of the life and the vocation of an *ancelle*. One year of canonical novitiate in company with the contemplative and teaching novices of the Congregation of Our Lady of Sion. This plan is adopted for the sake of the unity of the Congregation, but we need not conceal the fact that in practice it presents difficulties and doubtless in its turn demands an adaptation. This year in common is followed by another year of novitiate amongst the *ancelles*, at the end of which the first vows are taken. Then begins a two or three years' scholasticate consecrated rigorously to Holy Scripture, history of Israel and the Church, the great theological treatises, catechism and even Hebrew. After this comes the professional formation for those who have no job as yet.

Clearly this formation might seem very lengthy. Five years to form one of the staff in a local hostel, or a mother's help! Doubtless, but this adaptation of religious formation to intellectual and doctrinal needs is quite the reverse of a concession to intellectualism. They do not make blue-stockings of these young people. In order to understand this it is enough to remember the exigencies of an apostolic vocation. This longer formation has as its aim to form the personality more solidly—and to prepare the sister to attack graver and more urgent problems. The world into which she is sent is complex and hard, full of questions, error and anxieties. It is the task of the apostle to recognize the problems, and to show up the illusions in the name of truth. After all, even if this relatively technical formation should never be explicitly used, there is a deeper reason for this prolonged study of divine

truth. She learns to know God, quite simply. Study for a nun is first and foremost at the service of faith and of the contemplative life.

ORGANIZATION OF HIERARCHY AND GOVERNMENT

As regards the organization of authority and obedience, the *ancelles* are still too few to make any definite account possible. The placing of superiors and the distribution of communities are still in the experimental stage. We can, however, trace the direction which must be followed in adapting the traditional régime of Sion to the new apostolic needs facing these little communities.

First of all, as we have had occasion to see already, like many other recent apostolic foundations the *ancelles* are divided into little groups of three or four. Four seems to be the smallest number which can justly be called a community, that is to say a group providing a common life from which the sisters can derive real spiritual help and in which they can together give witness of the fraternal life of the gospels. This minimum would be necessary if only for practical considerations, such as the recitation of the Office and the cooking of meals!

Each of these little communities is headed by a member 'responsible' for the house, who is like an elder sister or the captain of a team, and who has to organize everyday life and give ordinary permissions.

The effective authority remains in the hands of the local superior, who directs several houses or residences in the same town or district. These superiors are nominated, like all the other superiors of the Congregation of Sion, by the Mother General and her council.

In towns where there are not yet enough sisters to have a superior or where there is no one fit to undertake this post, the *ancelles* are answerable for their life and their undertakings to the local superior of the nearest house of Sion. This is far from being an ideal solution, and as you can see, it gives rise to a host of practical problems, time-table, travelling, various permissions, above all understanding, because you will appreciate how vastly different are the two ways of life. This obligation of having recourse to a superior of the teaching branch has long been the case. I have known such cases myself. It is a transitional stage from which the *ancelles* are being liberated the more they grow in number and in importance.

Holding the highest place, that is to say at the top of the pyramid of 'responsables' and local superiors, is the superior of the *ancelles*. She is responsible for the whole branch to the Superior General. Actually, at the present time, the superior of the *ancelles* is a member of the central council of the Congregation. She was formerly head of the school in Paris and has kept her position as councillor. It is clearly desirable that the situation should be safeguarded by Law, for it is normal that the apostolic branch should be directly represented within the central council of the Congregation. From the point of view of authority and obedience, the constitutional link, set out in the formula of profession, seems to be assured by this personal connection of the superior of the branch with the central council. Canonically, then, if we leave aside the intermediate position of the 'responsible' which in the last resort is no different from the position of minor officials in large communities, the situation of an *ancelle* is the same as that of any other sister in the congregation.

There is, however, a difference in the spirit in which authority is exercised. This will become clear from two facts: *First*, the practical direction of the work, the staffing of the residences and the choice of occupations are decided by the superior, but she takes all her decisions only after consulting a council called the 'conseil de direction' which comprises local superiors and certain 'responsible' for the more important houses. Sometimes the Mother General of Sion takes part in these meetings. *Secondly*, the direction of the work, the readjustment and correction of various experiments are accomplished by periodical meetings called 'réunions de travail' which assemble all the sisters having an important apostolic commitment. There is no question here of soviets, but inner councils under the guidance of religious and theologians.

Nothing is finally settled in these different institutions, but we can observe the same balance between *dependence on* the superior, and the *maturity* required by the task—the same balance with the same dangers and consequently the same requirements.

In the same realm of organization I would instance just one very important case of adaptation, the more important in that we are dealing with a congregation of long standing—there are no longer any lay sisters among the *ancelles*, though they are still numerous in the other branches of Sion. I can remember the time when they

were divided into lay sisters and choir sisters. This distinction has been abolished under pressure of circumstances, because of the identity of the apostolic task. I could give examples of former lay sisters who have become 'responsable de residence', in charge of houses, and who, in all probability, are future superiors. Much could be said on this point. I simply offer the fact for your consideration, because it seems to me a very important adaptation.

CONCLUSION

This paper has been very long, and I do not want to extend it unnecessarily. On the other hand, many important points could still be made. We have not spoken, for instance, of the community life of the sisters. But it is obvious that certain existing forms of apostolic life would change its shape. Moreover, I am aware of having touched on a host of questions from a very restricted view point. I have spoken to you of the *ancelles*, because it is the subject I know personally. They are, let me repeat, not the only ones. Lastly and above all there are many other problems besides those we have discussed. It would be interesting, for example, to see what has already been done in France along the lines desired and officially laid down by the Holy See. Still, I think we have sufficient material to be able to draw some conclusions.

We have chosen as a basis for our consideration a rather notable example of adaptation—the development of the *ancelles* of Sion. You have seen for yourselves the continuity of inspiration and vocation. Sion was founded in the nineteenth century for the apostolate to the Jews. The *ancelles* have done nothing but take up and in some ways deepen this original ideal. And it is in their faithfulness to this original vocation that they have been able to develop new forms. Certainly there has been a change, and a considerable one. It is enough to compare the two Directories, that of the teaching sisters and that of the *ancelles*, or rather the old with the new, because the teachers themselves are on the way to adapting their own life.

But this change takes place on the level of what we may call 'a way of life'. Nothing has been changed on the level of the *spirit* or of the spirituality. We have seen an adaptation in the way of life. The vows remain untouched in their substance as do the observances in their reality.

If we try now to sum up the determining factors and reasons of such an adaptation, we can put them under two heads, or rather at two opposite poles.

There is an adaptation which is made so to speak *from above*, coming from a new or more acute realization of the original vocation. Thus in the case of the *ancesses* and similar communities, this factor has been the urgency of the apostolic work. An Order or a Congregation, the Church in fact, adapts itself when it becomes conscious of its *vocation* and its *mission*. It is this need for adaptation from above which is behind the return to the essential of vows and observances we have seen in their various forms: *abandonment* and poverty, *consecration* and virginity, *service* and obedience.

But there is also an adaptation due to pressure *from below*, so to speak, coming from the obligation of speaking the language of our contemporaries, of using their techniques, of sharing to some extent their way of life—in a word, coming from the needs of the times. We have had to meet the demands of fashion, for instance, and of psychoanalysis. There is no reason to be surprised that adaptation should include these aspects. It is an inescapable law, the law of our human condition, the law of the Incarnation itself. As we know, God himself submitted to the limitations of our flesh and our time. But our world is wounded by sin, and experience has shown that an adaptation governed entirely by pressure *from below* is full of dangers and deceptions. There is the danger of compromise with the world. That would be, not an adaptation of the religious life, but its dissolution.

What I hope to have shown by the various experiences I have described is that the best, and indeed the only, way of avoiding the dangers of an adaptation governed by factors *from below* is precisely a more fervent acceptance of, and fidelity to, the factors making for an adaptation *from above*.

In other words, we must face the paradox that adaptation is possible only on condition of being faithful to what is essential. The only guarantee of a successful development of new forms, of a balanced change in the manner of the life, is a return to the source of the vocation, to the source of the spirit. For in every vocation it is the original spirit which is eternal and which can continually give life to new forms.

Let us not be in a hurry to believe that we have refound this

spirit in all its purity. Very often we petrify the spirit in a letter, or in a way of life too ancient or too new. Every Congregation knows the struggle between die-hards and radicals, ancient and modern. Such quarrels grow up because both sides consider only factors *from below*, whereas problems of adaptation must be governed only by factors *from above*.

The few experiences we have seen have shown us, by the facts themselves, the conditions of such an attitude. We have seen that if these adaptations have met with some success, and possess some solidity, it is because they have been based on two things: *first*, on a deep sense of 'the absolute' of God, and *secondly* on the maturity of an adult, capable at the same time of dependence and freedom.

Sense of God, maturity of conscience. If you like, consecration and maturity. These seem to be in fact the conditions of any adaptation of the religious life. Two conditions which, in the last resort, are only one. For what is maturity of a religious life if not the quite personal awareness of the absolute of God? *The sense of God in a mature conscience.*

Religious life is essentially a consecration. I think I can say that we have reached this conclusion, the same truth, from the facts, and shown that awareness of this consecration is at once the soul and the guarantee of all adaptation.

When I was asked to take the place of Father Plé in this conference and told the subject, adaptation, my first inclination was to refuse it. I thought the subject useless, and I said to myself, 'Why do these sisters need to be told about adaptation? If they are really living they will adapt themselves. Anyone who is really alive does not ask such questions.'

I hope I have convinced you that I believe in adaptations. Nevertheless my conclusion remains the same. Sisters, if you want to adapt your life, live! And as St Dominic said to his brethren: 'Keep the fervour of the spirit.'

POINTS OF VIEW

Difficulties of a Mixed Marriage

G. ST LEVAN

THE difficulties of a mixed marriage are many, and vary according to whether the marriage is between a born Catholic and a non-Catholic, or a Catholic and a 'Good Pagan'. Other problems arise when a marriage is contracted between members of other denominations and one or other of them is later received into the Catholic Church.

In the first case the non-Catholic partner has been instructed and so has some idea of his, or her, partner's beliefs. The Catholic has well-rooted habits of thought and behaviour, and probably a home background which prevents the feeling of strangeness and loneliness often experienced by the convert.

If the non-Catholic partner is religious, and believes in the sanctity of marriage, matters are of course easier, and when difficulties arise both will seek in prayer the help they need.

A 'Good Pagan's' approach to marriage is probably to regard it as a social contract; while admitting that a home should be stable, and in it a civic sense of responsibility, kindness and other human virtues encouraged and fostered, he is unlikely to regard it as indissoluble, and certainly not as 'a perfect figure of [Christ's] union with his spouse the Church'.

In both these cases youth, and love, help to form the pattern of the marriage in its initial stages, and as the different problems arise to adapt them to the growing pattern.

Where however the marriage has started from a good but non-religious foundation, but where one of the partners has, after thought and instruction, become a Catholic a certain lop-sided strain may occur. To converts, tired, yet inflamed with the wonders they have just found, there comes a sense of loneliness, of apartness from those who are nearest to them. Their sense of values changes and a new life must be begun. At this point, inexperienced and unready, converts may have to face arguments, and to see that their loved opponent feels that those of the Faith are arrogant in their claim that the Church of Rome is the only true Church; an iron curtain seems to descend between them. The necessary readjustment in the customs and ways of the home may

further increase this sense of separateness. There may be difficulties over the early rising necessary in order to go to Communion; Sunday Mass, and Mass on Days of Obligation may be a further cause of friction. Throughout these practical details of adjustment the convert has to, in a way, think twice; the old familiar desire to act and to do, to use one's private judgment, must be replaced by a greater calmer trust in God, by a more vivid realization of the supernatural—in fact, there has to be a new relationship between themselves and God.

This new life of the spirit must, and does, percolate through every detail of the daily life of the two people who up till now have moved in the same climate, spoken the same language. What grace is needed to weld these differing ways of life! Matters heretofore agreed upon may become areas of conflict; actions and modes of thought may clash.

Their unity of interests and of enjoyment may be split by the different approach of either the husband or the wife.

The balance of interest changed, so naturally to a certain extent are their friends, and here again opposition may occur.

Individual choice on matters such as birth-control or divorce must now give place to that of the Church's ruling, and on the one side only. Is it to be wondered at that the unity and close companionship of a happy marriage may seem threatened?

Where the marriage is one made outside the Church, the question of the children's education may be another stumbling-block. At the best, where parents belong to a different faith, religious education has to be very carefully fostered and guarded. Where one of the two is not only anti-Catholic, but perhaps antagonistic to religion, matters are even more acute.

For the Catholic partners there are always two great dangers: the one to become separate and encased in their own beliefs and thus losing charity and engendering a certain spiritual pride; alternatively to drift into a laxity, or even to lapse altogether. These dangers are obviously best combated by increasingly turning to the help of the Sacraments, prayer, and a deepening of their inner spiritual life.

One difficulty always remains, and that is: 'That there is always a likelihood that a difference in religion will cause quarrels; thus that which ought to be the strongest bond of union between husband and wife becomes a source of disunion.'¹

¹ The Students' Catholic Doctrine. Hart. p. 398.

Problems of Peace

JOHN P. MCWALTER evidently regards pacifism as essential to Christianity, and with his attitude I have much sympathy, but does he suppose that throughout the centuries the Catholic Church has failed to understand the teaching of our Lord—if any—in this controversial matter? If complete and unconditional repudiation of all violence were an integral element of Christianity, assuredly when baptizing the centurion Cornelius, St Peter would have required the new convert to abandon his way of life and the position would have been clear from the early days of the Church. The traditional distinction between counsel and precept is eminently reasonable and permits full scope for the practice of non-violence; pacifists should refrain from an endeavour to intrude their own ideals upon others, there are issues in which conscience must be the guide both for them and for opponents; outside the realm of dogma, Christianity is wide—*Latum mandatum tuum nimis*.

Does Mr McWalter really hold that 'Thou shalt not kill' is a plain universal command that requires no interpretation and 'admits of no exception'? If an escaped lunatic runs amok brandishing a hatchet, may not a Christian employ violence in restraint, involving if necessary a bullet with possibly fatal results? May not a marauding tiger be shot, or a mosquito be killed? Is it wrong to take the life of vegetable or fruit for human sustenance? Some say that the Hebrew commandment is 'Thou shalt not murder', but in any case, interpretation seems involved. And your correspondent's final quotation is also unconvincing, for although 'those who take the sword' do sometimes perish by it, more frequently they do not. Interpretation again!

JOHN NIBB

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REVIEWS

BREAD IN THE WILDERNESS. By Thomas Merton. (Hollis and Carter; 15s.)

One has the impression that this short book of reflections has perhaps grown out of conferences delivered to the novices or students of Fr Merton's own monastery. It is, as it says, a book about the psalms, though rather round about them. The last part of the book especially, and the part which is much the best, is mainly concerned with the dispositions of mind and heart necessary for reciting the Divine Office fruitfully. This is the section which incorporates in general terms the approach of St Augustine to the psalter, and it is a pity that it was not made the starting-point of the volume and developed with some quite particular examples. For the first part of *Bread in the Wilderness* is disturbed by arguments with imaginary opponents of a kind one could never meet outside the covers of a textbook. There is indeed one passage (p. 39) in this section which gets so bewitched with those beguiling words 'immanence' and 'transcendence' that it makes very little sense. Perhaps less harmless is the attempt (pp. 13-14) to distinguish between contemplation and what is called 'mere faith' by putting faith outside the field of experience altogether. If ever one is to be able to maintain that contemplation is a deepened and heightened awareness of what is initially given in faith this kind of distinction must be avoided. Doubtless it is suggested by a wish to safeguard an orthodox position on the objective character of faith. But it fails to note that the faith which is presupposed whether to the most humdrum meditation or to the loftiest of the infused gifts, is faith *as a virtue*, and hence something legitimately spoken of as within the field of experience, albeit there may be nothing very exciting about it. It may again be questioned whether the distinction between symbol and myth made on page 55 is really very satisfactory.

None of these criticisms, however, should blind us to the book's many virtues, not the least of which is Fr Merton's communicative concern for spiritual things. It is no small matter to have made many people want to pray or try to pray better.

ÆLRED SQUIRE, O.P.

AGAINST THE STREAM. By Karl Barth. (S.C.M. Press; 16s.)

DU PROTESTANTISME A L'EGLISE. By Louis Bouyer. (Les Editions du Cerf. Paris; n.p.)

Both these books are important. The former is a collection of papers written by Barth between 1916 and 1952. Once again Barth

is concerned to state Christian Doctrine in the face of the world, but his particular view of what that doctrine is leads to strange conclusions. His rejection of natural law, the transcendental character of his thought, leads him to distrust 'Christian' political parties, and indeed any association with the non-Reformed. This is not to say that he denies that the Christian must act in the civil sphere—he is very clear that he must, but since he so fundamentally distrusts nature, it is clear that he cannot allow of a Christian theory of the state; one is only permitted to speak of a 'direction'. Barth sees so clearly the necessity of the Church preserving her freedom so that she may speak of the things of God, that one regrets profoundly that his view of *gratia sola*, as destructive of the good of the whole created order, should blind him to the divine 'condescension' whereby the imperfect, but perfectible, human is incorporated in Christ, and thus becomes, in all its aspects, the medium of grace.

In the second book the Abbé Bouyer has excelled himself, and it is to be hoped that we shall see this work translated in English very soon. Few living writers have M. Bouyer's extensive acquaintance with both classic and contemporary Protestant theology, intimate understanding of Newman, and grasp of Patristic thought. In his latest work he shows how the negative factors in the Reformation movement, which stem from a nominalist theology, not only find issue in theories of forensic justice and rejection of all 'good works', but give rise to theories and even demands for 'inner light' and set in motion that constant series of reactions between formalism and revivalism, transcendence and humanism, which characterizes the history of Protestantism. This, found in the latter part of the book, is treated as an apologetic theme leading towards the Church. The first part of the book is, perhaps, even more valuable for the teacher and student of '*De Ecclesia*' for there we find an illuminating analysis of the great positive convictions which gave, and still give, strength to the movement—each of these is treated at length and it is shown the 'value' represented is found in the Catholic Church. These convictions are Luther's '*gratia sola*', the idea of the all-sufficiency of God, which burst forth in John Wesley's hymns; Calvin's sovereignty of God, with which nothing can be compared, and the Calvinist's love of the psalm, for only God can speak well of God—the list could be continued from M. Bouyer's pages, but perhaps enough has been said to indicate that his book is an indispensable introduction for those who want to know what motivates Protestantism and why, on the long view, those motives, though vital, are inadequate.

IAN HISLOP, O.P.

CATCH US THOSE LITTLE FOXES. By A Carmelite Nun. (Herder; 5s.)

Human common sense suffused by the gracious wisdom of holiness is the special quality of this Carmelite nun who has delighted a large public for many years. Her reflections on life in general and on modern holiness in particular have been presented in *Each Hour Remains*, *Our Eternal Vocation*, *Heartbreak Earth*. This time she gives us ninety-five pages of rich reflections, so arranged and divided up that the reader accompanies her through a typical day in a Carmelite life, each period of the day being a chapter. In this way it is a 'vocations' book, portraying Carmel for anyone who is interested and thinking of entering. Its general interest lies in this, that the picture of Carmelite life is generously filled in with thoughts about holiness in general: a typical Carmelite thinking aloud about her own life as a human life. It is extraordinary how often she says things which apply not only to Carmelites but to people in the world who are trying to live holily, to create what Dr John Wu calls an interior Carmel.

Sometimes the little Carmelite vignette seems merely an excuse for talking about something else. This is an advantage because whichever way she roams—history, liturgy, even philosophy—this writer has something helpful to say. Work, unselfishness, temptation, perplexity about God's will, all come up for mention.

In the chapter on vocation it is difficult to follow her all the way; there is perhaps a tendency to humanize the inscrutable ways of God in the calling, and holding, of souls.

The chapter on 'Prayer and the Way of it' is a gem of its kind. It will help everyone but especially those who are apt to get confused by degrees of prayer, theories of prayer or what Caryll Houselander used to call 'expertness in prayer'.

The best book yet from this gifted pen, it will console many, enlighten many, and help to spread commonsense holiness among lay people as well as religious.

G.M.C.

THE WESTERN FATHERS: *being the Lives of SS. Martin of Tours, Ambrose, Augustine of Hippo, Honoratus of Arles, and Germanus of Auxerre.* Translated and edited by F. R. Hoare. (Sheed and Ward; 18s.)

THE ANGLO-SAXON MISSIONARIES IN GERMANY: *being the Lives of SS. Willibrord, Boniface, Sturm, Leoba and Lebuin, together with the Hodoeporicon of St Willibald and a Selection from the Correspondence of St Boniface.* Translated and edited by C. H. Talbot. (Sheed and Ward; 16s.)

These are the first two volumes in Sheed and Ward's 'Makers of Christendom' series, of which the General Editor is Mr Christopher

Dawson. The series will eventually comprise a collection of Christian biographical documents coming right down to the present day. It will be a great monument to its originator; for the cultural importance of historical Christianity, which has been the theme of Mr Dawson's major works, most recently in his Gifford Lectures on Religion and Culture in 1948-9, will be demonstrated at last in a series of original documents far too long neglected by modern scholars and their students.

Mr Hoare's volume on the Western Fathers covers the fourth century (the period of S. L. Greenslade's *Church and State from Constantine to Theodosius*, reviewed in these pages in December). It is the period when the constitutional distinctions between priests and bishops are becoming stereotyped; when the two forms of monasticism—the Antonian eremite type and the Pachomian conventual type—are both flourishing; when baptism is something deferred till near death, from a misguided notion that post-baptismal sins cannot be forgiven; and—grand delight as one reads the racy narratives—when bishops were sometimes consecrated at the defiant insistence of popular acclaim, and against all comers. Mr Talbot's volume covers the eighth century, that of the evangelizing of the Frisian and German lands by St Boniface and others from the British Islands.

Both books are a delight to read, save for one or two turgid or prolix sections in which not even the lively resource of the translator can redeem the shortcomings of the Latin. It is the aim throughout to 'preserve the feeling and manner of the original' and let the Lives speak for themselves. Where there is obscurity, we have footnotes to clarify or argue it, along with the footnote-biographies and footnote-cross-references. The translations abound with graphically 'modern' passages: for example, almost at random, the following, from Possidius's life of Augustine:

'So a day and place were fixed and they met in the presence of a large and interested audience and a crowd drawn by curiosity. The shorthand reporters opened their notebooks and the debate was opened on one day and concluded on the next. In the course of it, as the record of the proceedings shows, the exponent of Manicheism could neither refute the Catholic case nor succeed in proving that the sect of the Manichee was founded on truth. When he broke down in his final reply, he undertook to consult his superiors. . . .'

Some of these Lives—Sulpicius Severus on St Martin, Constantius of Lyons on St Germanus, Alcuin on St Willibrord—are better known than others. The most fascinating of the narratives are those of St Boniface, of 'Exanchester', going *via* 'Londenwich' and the North Sea on his German missionary enterprise; and of Willibald, monk of

Bishops Waltham Abbey, whose account of his years-long pilgrimage to the Holy Land in the middle of the eighth century was taken down from his own words upon his return to Germany, by a Heidenheim nun so caught up in what she was recording that at times the narrative says 'we'.

They were two great centuries. Mr Hoare has some tart things to say about the style and the credulity of some of the pious biographers; for miracles abound, devils are cast out wholesale, and these Ages of Saints are in general spectacular. But the truly historic influence of the Saints can never be gathered from standard monographs and secondary sources to anything like the extent possible for these first-hand, and sometimes day-to-day, accounts. For that reason, while the complete series will become in due time an authority for students, and for reference, each volume as it appears is for the general reader as well; for each is complete in its period, representative in its selection, and absorbing in its narrative interest and the meditations it prompts.

A. C. F. BEALES

THE LAST OF THE FATHERS. By Thomas Merton. (Hollis and Carter; 10s. 6d.)

This is a title frequently given to St Bernard of Clairvaux, who, writing in the twelfth century just before the age of the scholastics, was the last exponent of the patristic scriptural tradition. A good deal was written about St Bernard in 1953 on the occasion of his eighth centenary, but much of it was for specialists. A notable exception, however, was the Encyclical letter of Pius XII. In this the Holy Father, deploring the way in which the mystical life is so often neglected or forgotten, exhorts all the faithful, not only the clergy and religious, to read and meditate on St Bernard's writings on the subject. The Saint teaches that every soul, no matter how ensnared in vice, may aspire to marriage with the Word by reason of the image of God which it sees within itself. Some of the best passages from the Song of Songs, including the one just mentioned, are quoted in the Encyclical and these will surely serve to whet the appetite for more from the same source. Happily this appetite can be easily gratified, as an excellent selection of these sermons translated into English and edited by a religious of C.S.M.V. was published by Mowbray's in 1952.

Father Merton has preceded his translation of the Encyclical by a succinct sketch of St Bernard, a brief account of his writings, which again whets one's appetite, and by some notes commenting on the text.

The book is a pleasure to handle as it is so attractively printed and bound.

A. J. MEIKLE

NOTICES

JACOB BOEHME is one of the outstanding Protestant mystics and many years ago W. Scott Palmer extracted from his profuse, disorderly and mysterious works sufficient autobiographical material to justify the title *Confessions* (Methuen; 2nd edition 1954; 6s.). Miss Underhill in her introduction has shown that Boehme derived his inspiration not only from Lutheran and theosophic sources but also from the German Catholic mystical tradition begun by Eckhart. The mixture of traditions in this early seventeenth-century cobbler is somewhat bewildering, but it is intriguing for the student of mysticism to observe how powerfully the Neoplatonic idealism can work on almost anyone with a 'mystical temperament'.

THE GREAT PRAYER (Collins; 12s. 6d.) for Hugh Ross Williamson is the Roman Canon of the Mass, which he regards as a powerful instrument in the ecumenical movement as it has been accepted unchanged in this country by so many Christians since the end of the sixth century. Here he comments on the Canon historically (though not always accurately) and devotionally. It is perhaps unfortunate that he should regard it as so essentially changeless, since it is only one form of the essential Eucharistic prayer which springs from the reality of the sacramental presence upon which so many non-Catholics disagree. And also to begin with the *Te igitur*, omitting the Preface, and to conclude with the *Pater noster* present that particular Eucharistic prayer in a somewhat truncated form.

THE MEANING OF HOLINESS (Burns Oates; 10s. 6d.), was written by a French philosopher, Louis Lavelle, who died in 1951. This work, called originally *Quatre Saints*, has been translated by Dorothea O'Sullivan and introduced by Dom Iltyd Trethowan, who shows how the philosopher when true to his science is led into the heart of religious thought. The book shows too how great saints and mystics like St Francis, St John of the Cross, St Teresa and St Francis de Sales—all considered here in separate chapters—prove irresistibly attractive to certain types of philosophical mind. But the juxtaposition and comparison of these four very different saints make a valuable contribution to the understanding of Christian holiness.

OUR LADY SAINT MARY (Icon Press, The Croft, Hastings; 5s.), is a charming little hand-printed book heralding incidents in the story of the Queen of Heaven having special relevance to England. The text, written by William Griffiths, is printed against a background of simple lino-cuts and with delightful gargoyle-like initial letters by Philip Brown.

EXTRACTS

THE Editor of THE LIFE has received the following communication from the London Aquinas Society, whose papers often receive the favourable notice they deserve in our pages.

DEAR SIR,

Many readers of THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT will be familiar with the Papers published from time to time by the Aquinas Society of London, which have for many years made a notable contribution to the advancement of Thomist studies in this country and indeed in the English-speaking world. These published Papers are a selection from those read and discussed at meetings of the Society, and thus owe their existence in the last resort to an active body of interested members who take part in these meetings and who also support the Study Week Ends, Disputations and other activities of the Society.

I have been instructed by the Executive Committee to seek your kind co-operation in bringing these fact to the notice of your readers, with a view to increasing membership of the Society.

The object of the Society is to study the principles of Thomist philosophy—not solely by reference to the writings of St Thomas but also in relation to other philosophical systems—with a view to their application to the intellectual, ethical and social problems of the day. Membership is open to all persons irrespective of religious denomination, and although no academic qualifications are required, it will prove particularly valuable to those who have undertaken, or are undertaking, a course of philosophical studies, e.g., those arranged by the Extra-Mural Departments of the Universities, and similar bodies.

The minimum annual subscription of 10s. will, for an experimental period, entitle a member to a free copy of certain of the Society's publications for the current year, with *special concessions for country members* who are unable to attend the meetings.

Any of your readers who would like fuller details of the Society, or who wish to become members or to renew membership, are invited to write to me at 476 Upper Richmond Road, Richmond, Surrey.

Yours faithfully,

J. B. WELLS

Hon. Secretary, Aquinas Society.

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Franziskus Stratmann, O.P.

During the war the well-known German Dominican, Franziskus Stratmann, was hunted by the Nazis but succeeded in hiding in a Flemish convent—a convent of the Order of Bethany whose special work is to reclaim, by love and charity, women who because of their sins are branded social outcasts. The Christ-like attitude to those who have strayed inspired Father Stratmann to write this absorbing and moving book, which considers the spiritual implications of the Sisters' work and its lesson for the rest of the world. First published in Flemish and later in German this translation is made by Hilda Graef.

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